

WASHINGTON, DC – Representative Rob Wittman (VA-1) reintroduced the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act, which aims to permanently make federal duck stamps available for purchase online. Wittman's legislation, introduced on Thursday, would allow sportsmen across the country to more easily obtain a federal duck stamp through an electronic program, rather than requiring an in-person visit to a local Post Office.

Wittman, an avid waterfowl hunter and member of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, stated: "The sale and distribution of the federal duck stamp is a critical part of conserving vital waterfowl habitat across this nation. I am proud to reintroduce this legislation, which modernizes the sale and distribution of the federal duck stamp program without burdening the taxpayer. While this issue may seem small for many, passage of the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act would be an important step forward for the conservation of our natural areas for use and enjoyment by future generations."

Wittman was joined in introducing the legislation by Representative Ron Kind (WI-3). "This bill helps more hunters, collectors and outdoor enthusiasts get their duck stamps, which raise critical funds for conservation efforts around the country," said Rep. Kind. "It makes the process of getting a duck stamp quick and easy with the added benefit of helping conserve our natural heritage for future generations."

For 79 years, millions of Americans have strongly supported the Federal Duck Stamp Program. Each year, hunters, bird watchers, stamp collectors and wildlife enthusiasts have traveled to their local Post Offices, National Wildlife Refuges and sporting goods stores to obtain their annual stamp. In fact, since 1934, more than 120 million federal duck stamps have been sold nationwide. Of that total, 1.25 million were purchased in Virginia. With the sale of these stamps, more than \$800 million has been collected and deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation

Fund. These monies have been used to purchase or lease over 5.3 million acres of vital wetlands and essential waterfowl habitat that have been incorporated within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Unlike many states, however, which allow consumers to obtain their annual fishing and hunting licenses online, there was no authority to purchase a federal duck stamp online. With the passage of the Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2005, the Federal Duck Stamp Program took a technological step forward. This law established a three-year pilot program to allow individuals to purchase their stamps online, and the Fish and Wildlife Service was directed to evaluate the effectiveness of this new electronic program.

This legislation, authored by Rep. Wittman, would make the online purchase of federal duck stamps a permanent feature of federal law. Just like the pilot program, the electronic proof of purchase will both fulfill the requirements for waterfowl hunters to possess the stamp and allow visitors free access to our nation's 553 national wildlife refuges. After 45 days, the proof of purchase will expire and the purchasers must possess the traditional paper stamp to receive its full benefit.

The Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act is supported by conservation organizations, including Ducks Unlimited and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation.

Gary Taylor, Director of Governmental Affairs for Ducks Unlimited, said, "The federal duck stamp is an American tradition strongly supported by hunter conservationists and other wildlife enthusiasts and the electronic duck stamp will add convenience for waterfowlers. Sportsmen and women can purchase and download a duck stamp instantaneously rather than waiting in lines. They can spend more time outdoors and that's good for conservation."

Wittman's legislation previously passed the House of Representatives on January 23, 2012, by a vote of 373-1, but was not considered by the Senate before the end of the 112th Congress.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee, where he is Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee. Wittman also serves as Co-Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Caucus and Vice-Chair of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus.